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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	DO EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS MANIPULATE EARNINGS? <i>SEYED HOSSEIN HOSSEINI & MOHAMADREZA ABDOLI</i>	1
2.	MANAGEMENT EDUCATION – IMPACT OF VALUE ORIENTATIONS ON CAREER & BUSINESS <i>PUSHPA SHETTY</i>	7
3.	STRATEGIC GAINS OF BY-PRODUCT MARKETING: A STUDY ON SELECTED COMPANIES OF BANGLADESH <i>GOLAM MOHAMMAD FORKAN & TAHSAN RAHMAN KHAN</i>	13
4.	THE EFFECT OF CURRENCY DEVALUATION ON THE ETHIOPIAN ECONOMY'S TRADE BALANCE: A TIME SERIOUS ANALYSIS <i>FIKREYESUS TEMESGEN & MENASBO GEBRU</i>	17
5.	MUTUAL FUNDS IN INDIA: AN ANALYSIS OF INVESTORS PERCEPTIONS <i>DR. PRASHANTA ATHMA & K. RAJ KUMAR</i>	21
6.	FINANCES OF CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION, OSMANIA UNIVERSITY, HYDERABAD, ANDHRA PRADESH: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY <i>G. VENKATACHALAM & P. MOHAN REDDY</i>	27
7.	THE INFLUENCE OF MARKETING ON CONSUMER ATTITUDE FUNCTIONS FOR KITCHENWARE, A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KOCHI METRO <i>ANILKUMAR. N</i>	32
8.	BEHAVIOURAL FINANCE: A NEW PERSPECTIVE FOR INVESTMENT IN FINANCIAL MARKET <i>DR. SREEKANTH. M S</i>	39
9.	THE EFFECT OF MERGER AND ACQUISITIONS ON THE SHAREHOLDERS' WEALTH: EVIDENCE FROM THE FOOD INDUSTRY IN INDIA <i>DR. RAMACHANDRAN AZHAGAI AH & T. SATHISH KUMAR</i>	42
10.	WHETHER DIFFERENCES MAKE DIFFERENCES? A NEW PARADIGM ON WORKFORCE DIVERSITY <i>D. RAMADEVI & DR. S. A. SENTHIL KUMAR</i>	54
11.	CORPORATE SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT: NEW BASE LINE TO CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY <i>KAVITA MEENA</i>	59
12.	GREEN MARKETING <i>BRIJESH SIVATHANU PILLAI & KANCHAN PRANAY PATIL</i>	64
13.	MARKET EFFICIENCY AND INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKS IN THE SECURITIES MARKET OF INDIA – A STUDY <i>DR. MUNIVENKATAPPA</i>	74
14.	CHALLENGE OF LIQUIDITY RISK AND CREDIT RISK IN INSURANCE COMPANIES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INDIAN PUBLIC SECTOR GENERAL INSURANCE COMPANIES <i>AVINASH TRIPATHI</i>	82
15.	CONTEMPORARY ISSUE ON DEREGULATION OF SAVING ACCOUNT INTEREST RATE <i>DR. RAJIV GANDHI</i>	87
16.	A STUDY ON THE EFFECT OF FOOD ADVERTISEMENTS ON CHILDREN AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON PARENTS BUYING DECISION <i>GINU GEORGE</i>	92
17.	DETERMINANTS OF CORPORATE DIVIDEND POLICY IN SELECT PRIVATE SECTOR CEMENT COMPANIES IN TAMIL NADU - AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS <i>DR. V. MOHANRAJ & DR. N.DEEPA</i>	107
18.	THE ROLE OF 'FOLLOW THE NEIGHBOUR' STRATEGY AND FACTORS INFLUENCING INVESTMENT DECISION WITH REFERENCE TO NASIK CITY <i>BHUSHAN PARDESHI, PAVAN C. PATIL & PADMA LOCHAN BISOYI</i>	110
19.	IMPACT OF ADVERTISING ON BRAND RECALL AND BRAND PERSONALITY FORMATION: A STUDY OF ORGANISED FASHION RETAILING <i>HIMANSHU SHEKHAWAT & PREETI TAK</i>	116
20.	A CASE STUDY ON STRESS MANAGEMENT IN WORKING WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT\SEMI-GOVERNEMNT ENTERPRISES IN SHIMLA, (H.P.) <i>SHALLU SEHGAL</i>	122
21.	LEVERAGE ANALYSIS AND IT'S IMPACT ON SHARE PRICE AND EARNING OF THE SELECTED STEEL COMPANIES OF INDIA – AN EMPIRICAL STUDY <i>MUKESH C AJMERA</i>	129
22.	A STUDY ON LEVEL OF EXPECTATION OF MUTUAL FUND INVESTORS & IMPACT OF DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE ON PERIOD OF INVESTMENT IN MUTUAL FUND <i>TARAK PAUL</i>	136
23.	IMPACT OF MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS ON FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TATA GROUP <i>NEHA VERMA & DR. RAHUL SHARMA</i>	140
24.	EXPLORING SERVICE INNOVATION PROCESS AND STRATEGY IN DEVELOPING CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP-WITH REFERENCE TO CENTURYBANK 'YES BANK' <i>SHILPA SANTOSH CHADICHAL & DEBLINA SAHA VASHISHTA</i>	144
25.	EMPLOYEE LOYALTY ABOVE CUSTOMER LOYALTY <i>AFREEN NISHAT A. NASABI</i>	152
26.	FDI IN MULTIBRAND RETAILING IN INDIA: PERCEPTION OF THE UNORGANISED RETAILERS IN BUSINESS CAPITAL OF UTTARAKHAND <i>DEEPAK JOSHI</i>	156
27.	COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SELECTED PRIVATE SECTOR BANKS IN INDIA <i>NISHIT V. DAVDA</i>	161
28.	IMPACT OF HRM PRACTICES ON PERFORMANCE OF NON-ACADEMIC EMPLOYEES OF OPEN UNIVERSITIES IN INDIA <i>B. LAXMINARAYANA</i>	167
29.	POST-MERGER FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL OF ACQUIRING BANKS IN INDIA: A CASE ANALYSIS <i>AZEEM AHMAD KHAN</i>	172
30.	MANPOWER REQUIREMENT ASSESSMENT CONSIDERING THE MAKE OR BUY DECISION POLICY OF CENTRAL WORKSHOP IN AN INTEGRATED STEEL & POWER COMPANY <i>AKHILESH JHA, SOUPOARNO MUKHERJEE & RANDHIR KUMAR</i>	176
	REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK	181

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A CASE STUDY ON STRESS MANAGEMENT IN WORKING WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT\SEMI-GOVERNEMNT ENTERPRISES IN SHIMLA, (H.P.)

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ABSTRACT

'Stress' word has been borrowed from physics and mechanics where it means the physical pressure exerted upon, and between parts of body, when deformation occurs as result it is called strain. Stress is any change in your normal routine or health. Stress occurs when bad things happen, as well happy things. Getting a raise or a promotion is stress, just as getting fired from job is stress. Stress is basically an adaptive to respond to a situation that is perceived as challenging or threatening to the person's well-being. It is person's reaction to a situation, not the situation itself. Moreover, we experience stress when we believe that something will interfere with our need fulfillment. Stress has both psychological as well physiological dimensions. My aim in this paper was to gather a deep understanding of the stress in the working women. I tried to collect necessary information from the women working in government and semi-government organization in district Shimla of himachal Pradesh and to analyze how the deal with stress between office work and family work life. The study has been restricted to Shimla city only, due to accessibility, time constraints and other related factors. The women working in Shimla district in different department whether they are government or semi-government organization have been considered for the study with equal representation. it was found that the women working in these departments are found to be mostly stress free, as most of them are experienced and they know how to manage their work life and family life.

KEYWORDS

family work, office work, Stress, women, workplace.

INTRODUCTION

Stress is emerging as global phenomenon affecting all countries, professions and all categories of workers. Technology turmoil, information revolution, fast changing materialistic life style, innovations and growing competition have generated in man a feeling of powerlessness, helplessness, and in turn a source of consequent stress. Presently man experiences unprecedented turmoil, traumas and physical and mental disorders. Several studies have shown that individuals experiencing excessive stress make errors, fail to achieve targets, absent frequently; shift jobs indulge in chain smoking, drinking, or illicit relationship in the work place and even collapse. Therefore it is benefit to all to know stress including occupational by identifying causes and its coping mechanism.

WOMEN AND STRESS

Women are more likely to suffer from symptoms of stress. Working mothers, regardless of whether they are single or married, face higher stress levels and adverse health effects. Women are at an increased risk for developing stress-related chest pain. Working mother's most likely feel stressed because of their diverse workload. Stress in working mothers has the compound negative effect of potentially causing stress symptoms in their children.

SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

Stress is a universal phenomenon; people may differ in degree and level of its experience. Thus it is of utmost importance to identify and determine the victims. To point out people experiencing stress, some of the signs are as follows:

- Always fearing
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits
- Crediting failures to destiny
- Easily loses temper
- Failure to achieve targets
- Forgetfulness
- Faulty decisions
- Frequent physical complaints like headaches or stomach aches
- Guilt feeling
- Shift jobs frequently
- Heart diseases, ulcers, high blood pressure
- Higher absenteeism
- Impatient with idleness
- Indulge in chain smoking, drinking
- Job dissatisfaction, depression, exhaustion, moodiness, burn out
- Lack of concentration
- Poor performance
- Negative attitude
- Non-attentive to wearing and hairstyle
- Persistent sadness and hopelessness
- Poor or over confidence
- Poor self-esteem
- Shouting loudly
- Sweating and palm sweating in normal condition
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Upset stomach
- Violating social norms or law
- Willful disobedience
- Withdrawal from friends and activities once enjoyed
- Work place aggression
- Lack of focus
- Lack of energy

These symptoms hint at stress prone development and make it essential to find out causes contributing.

CAUSES OF STRESS

From the above pointed out stress symptoms it can be said there will be hardly any person without stress. Stressors, the causes of stress, include any environmental conditions that place a physical or emotional demand on the person. Stress happens when people feel like they don't have the tools to manage all of the demands in their lives. Stress can be short-term or long-term. Missing the bus or arguing with your spouse or partner can cause short-term stress. Money problems or trouble at work can cause long-term stress. Even happy events, like having a baby or getting married can cause stress. Some of the most common stressful life events include:

- Death of a spouse
- Death of a close family member
- Divorce
- Losing your job
- Personal injury or illness
- Marital separation
- Pregnancy
- Fired at work
- Retirement
- Gain of a new family member
- Change in responsibilities in work
- Change in living conditions
- Change work hours or conditions
- Change in sleeping habits
- Celebrating festival

But this is not the complete list and some points will not be relevant to everyone. To meet several major changes simultaneously one can adjust the reaction to them and relax, thereby lowering the level or arousal of stress the causes of stress found to be are as follows:

Over Ambition: Ambition makes person work. Fix deadlines and enjoy the life. It is good to be ambitious, but being over ambitious in relation to one's capabilities has many pitfalls and non-achievement of the unrealistic goals set by one self would result in stress.

Work Pressure: Work provide man livelihood but one should not become work alcoholic. Achieving outstanding results, this might result in publishing your body too hard. By working for long hours a day would hardly leave any time for rest.

Unrealistic Time Frame: Time is precious and needs scientific management for results. Sometimes people lay down a highly unrealistic and ambitious time frame for tasks. Alternatively by frequent procrastinating, person feels terrible pressure of time to meet deadlines.

Inadequate Rise and Growth Opportunities: Change and improvement in life make a man happy. It is a natural instinct among people to look forward to opportunities for growth in the society. When the environmental hampers advancement, the result is frustration.

Poor Inter- Personal Relationship: Interpersonal skills make a person social and successful. People lacking in this important art would encounter strained relationship with their younger, peers as well as the elders, resulting in conflicts.

Insecurity: Security is one of the basic needs of man. Political chaos, government instability, rising unemployment, and anti-social activities rise lead to insecurity feeling in society.

Change in Environment: Environment changes always cause upheavals in routine of man. People who change their places of residence frequently may found to be unable to cope up with the changed environment and suffer from physical as well as mental symptoms. They develop disturbed sleep, lose their appetite and begin suffering from palpitation and severe headaches. Their performance goes down day-by-day.

Excessive Commuting Time: With the increased transportation facilities traveling has become faster and cheaper. Unduly long commuting time especially for long distance suburban areas to the office coupled with the noise pollution and erratic traffic also causes stress, particularly for those who come often late to the office.

Noise Pollution: Excess voice and continuous noise lead to nervousness, fatigue and also make a person under stress.

Disturb Marital Life: Mismatches and traditional arranged marriages or quick marriages results in difference of opinion approach to live life of husband and wife upset mental peace.

High Cost of Living: Inflation causes restlessness in the present materialistic and highly competitive world. Economically poor suffer more this in developing economies in the absence or negligible social security cover.

Poor Employment Opportunities: Globalization and technology has enhanced employment for skilled but lessened opportunities for unskilled or semiskilled by killing labour intensive local and handicraft industry, etc.

Poor Hygiene and Civic Consciousness: Improper hygiene and civic conditions lead to many hurdles in the smooth life.

Privatization Spread: More and more privatization of PSU's causing insecurity, unemployment and problem of livelihood to many causing stress.

Illusions: Many people suffer in the world for their self-created problems, misinterpretations and unclear philosophy of life.

Factors leading to stress may vary from faulty learning, conflicting objectives, unclear philosophy of life, false ego and fast changing values of society. It hampers productivity and interpersonal relationships. With the rapid pace of science and technology and the advent of modernization, human life has become very complex, resulting in social tension and psychological disorder. The present miserable condition of society and its mental health are alarming. Tension, stress, anxiety and depression have become a part of life, thus in order to overcome these coping strategies could be as under.

COPING WITH STRESS

Know thyself: self knowledge has been observed to be the greatest wisdom, but many lack in it. How much arousal you can tolerate. Have the courage to say 'no' when things are too much. Recognize fatigue and take the action to remove it.

Find some time only for you every day: silence is gold, old saying deserve mention in the modern man's fast and hectic life. Tranquility should be a required feature for complete privacy, alone with your thoughts, and freedom from the pressure of work.

Ensure Physical Examination: people generally found to go for medical aid checkup in case of illness but wise always have a periodic physical examination to provide extra peace of mind.

Exercise: Economic advancement and technology have made life luxurious and more comfortable consequent poor health. So it is advised to use an aerobic exercise such as jogging to build your health to higher level of conditioning.

Massage: Like oiling machines in order to control wear and tear, human body also need maintenance. Close your eyes and use your fingertips, to vigorously massage your forehead and the back of your neck. Rub in circle, and rub hard, here help can be taken from massage experts. It helps body to relax and rejuvenate to act in a better way.

Put on Desire weight: Many people suffer from their physique, outlook and weight problems. Thus, get your body weight down to a level you can be pleased with, and keep it there.

Form and maintain sensible Eating habits: Ordinary people live to eat while wise eat to live, means conscious eating habits. Use sweet rarely, minimize intake of junk food, emphasis foods you like that are good for you.

Review your obligation: In the present service dominant society transaction and interaction need to be performed carefully. Review your obligation from time to time and make sure they will also bring reward for you. Divest yourself of those that are not good for you.

Open yourself to new experiences: Try doing things you have never done before, Sample food you have never eaten and go to places you have never seen. Find self-renewing opportunities.

Have Healthy Engagements: Rather than to be busy with or without work, it is advised to do work with purpose. Wise people engage in meaningful, satisfying work.

Have Smart Goals: Goals irrespective of individual, organizational or social offer opportunities and inspire to act but these must be smart specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic and timely) goals.

Changing the Environment: Get away from the situation that causes the stress. This may mean changing the work, shifting house, leaving home.

Take a Quick mental break: The busy and hectic and monstrous routine exhausts a man. So it is advisable to take a quick mental break by visualizing a favourite place in your mind whether it be the ocean, the mountains, or your own backyard. Concentrate on seeing, smelling and hearing the things you imagine.

Follow Natural Relaxers: Life is not a bed of roses always, for all, means different situations may arise but one should face these boldly. Free yourself from the tyranny of tranquilizers, sleeping pills, headache pills, and other central nervous system depressants. It is advised to rationalize sleeping, eating, living and working habits on one side and doing exercise, yoga, silent sitting and meditation, etc. on the other.

No Smoking: No doubt, smoking is injurious to health. Prolong habit cause various health problems.

Laugh: To laugh is one of the greatest exercises and practices to gain and maintain good health. Try to have good and holy company that makes one happier and help in relieving worries. Read one of your favourite jokes or simply laugh aloud.

Good Reading: Reading always has been a good friend of man but important to note is that garbage in garbage out. Read interesting books and articles to freshen your ideas and broaden your points of view. Listen to the positive and holy ideas and opinions of others in order to learn from them. Avoid 'psycho sclerosis' or hardening of the categories. Reduce and eliminate television watching and shift to reading.

Positive Outlook of stress: Stress is not always negative but accepts feelings of stressors. So don't let them alarm you. Later on, use the experience to deepen your understanding of other people.

Thus these suggestions may help man to control stress. No doubt, it is emerging a big threat to the well-being of man equally affecting working life.

WHAT CAUSES STRESS IN WOMEN?

Today's women bombarded with various specialized needs. What used to be fundamental as food, clothing, shelter, love and knowledge is gradually becoming a little more sophisticated. Perhaps it goes with the times and the recognition of women's capacity to wield a man's task while still being able to do their roles as a mother, a wife, a lover, or a daughter. Such demands would pressure women to physically and mentally respond either positively or negatively. These overwhelming

Demands are the usual cause of stress in women.

Nonetheless, stress can either make you or break you. It all depends on how a woman perceives and interprets stressful conditions. For some women, additional workload is nothing but a challenge for them to perform better. Some women on the other hand, are not quite susceptible to such abrupt changes.

Aside from that, the actual weight of the experience matters a lot if a woman would take the demand positively or negatively. Everyone has her own weak points and the moment these are tapped, stress and fatigue can easily found for itself a way to take its damaging toll on a woman.

Such stressful experiences are uncontrollable. What you can manage is how these circumstances are perceived so that they will not adversely affect your everyday lives. Stress can be productive if you let the causes of stress alert and motivate you to perform well. If you manage to take stress as a challenge, it will inspire you to improve yourself. How else will you learn if not for such trying situations that force you to do your best?

If you get to see stress as something inevitable especially to women who are flexible and versatile enough to multi-task, you might realize that sometimes, you have to be grateful that things like these come your way. Women are capable of doing almost anything humanly possible all at the same time.

If doing multiple activities at once won't cause you any stress, then you probably are Wonder Woman. But hey, thing is, Wonder Woman is also prone to stress- the only differences is that she knows how to handle it. Moving to a new house, getting married, taking an entrance exam or going to a job interview, failing- all these spells 'living your life- and during these pressing times, there is no other way to go but up. Lurk down there and you will find yourself too strained to gather yourself back. And there comes the dangers of stress in women.

Long periods of stress would cause women to become irritable, irate, and too emotional to the point that they can no longer do their everyday tasks. Worse comes to worst, such negative stress would cause them physical illness and depression.

Sometimes, these lead to inappropriate coping behaviors such as drinking too much alcohol, overeating, chain smoking, taking illegal drugs or improper dosages of prescribed medications. Sometimes, negative coping behaviors happen within your body without your knowledge of it.

That is why whenever a friend is experiencing an ordeal, significant changes in terms of physique and health conditions begin to surface. Times like these are usually caused by sudden losses especially death of a loved one. Others that could also lead to negative stress are relationship problems, finances, physical, verbal or sexual abuse etc. To cope with such kind of stress, women need whatever support they can get from family, friends and their significant other. Some causes might even need the professional help of a therapist and this has to be given a great consideration. Negligence of such would lead to further depression and illness, or worse, diseases such as cancer and cardiac arrest.

Women are very social and spiritual. To prevent negative stress, they need to constantly be reassured that they are being supported by those inside their peripherals. Aside from that, helping other people out during their trying times can also make you feel better about your own life. This would convert the causes of negative stress to something that is beneficial to the self as well as to others.

Do women react to stress differently than men?

One recent survey found that women were more likely to experience physical symptoms of stress than men. But we don't have enough proof to say that this applies to all women. We do know that women often cope with stress in different ways than men. Women "tend and befriend", taking care of those closest to them, but also drawing support from friends and family. Men are more likely to have the "fight or flight" response. They cope by "escaping" into a relaxing activity or other distraction.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A 2006 survey, conducted by the American Psychological Association, found that stress affects more women than men. In the United States, female workers accounted for the majority of stress-related cases during 1992-2001. Stress has reached epidemic proportions, with approximately 80% of all non-traumatic deaths caused by a stress-related illness. A survey in the new European Member States found that 90% of the respondents thought that stress is a major cause of disease in their countries. A Scandinavian study reported women perceived themselves to have a higher level of stress than men.

Job stressors are objective conditions in the work environment that tax an individual's emotional, physical, and cognitive stores, potentially leading to health problems. In the workplace, these stressors facilitate a response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and challenge their ability to cope. Stress can lead to reduced work effectiveness and ultimately increased employment absenteeism, health compromise, increased health expenses, and decreased income. Annual costs to U.S. employers for lost productive time amount to over \$250 billion.

A research was conducted for articles evaluating exercise, stress, and the working woman. The data bases CINAHL, Pub-Med, OVID, Pro-Quest, Medline, and ERIC were searched with the key words: exercise, stress and stressors, counseling, effects, working mothers, and sedentary lifestyle.

Over the past several decades, women's participation in the labor force has increased, particularly among married women with children. Currently, participation of women in the labor force is at 46.3%. More women are projected to enter the workforce, and proactive measures to reduce stress and to promote preventive health care strategies will have a better end result for employers and families.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

My aim was to gather a deep understanding of the stress in the working women. I tried to collect necessary information from the women working in government and semi-government organization in district Shimla and to analyze how they deal with stress between office-work and family-work life.

The study has been restricted to Shimla city only, due to accessibility, time constraints and other related factors.

The women working in Shimla district in different department whether they are government or semi-government organization have been considered for the study with equal representation.

The study is considered with a view that the above organization of Shimla represents almost the entire population (universe) of the hill state.

The scope of the study takes into consideration the various factor too, like

- 1) Age of the women
- 2) Experience of the women

The scope of the study is to conduct the survey and analyze the stress management in women that under how much stress a women is between her office work and family work. This study also concentrates on other related factors such as regarding their life style, how do they engage themselves in free time, are they happy with their job etc. and the overall effect on their life.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the study were:

- To study about the stress in working women.
- It was endeavored to study the related causes of stress.
- An attempt was also made to understand that how do they cope up with stress.
- To study what do they do in free time, if they get.

HYPOTHESIS

It is difficult to conduct any survey without making certain assumptions about the study.

Some assumptions which I made for the study are as follows:

- ❖ Sample is representative of the population.
- ❖ Respondents have responded correctly.
- ❖ The data recorded is correct.
- ❖ No errors are there.
- ❖ All working women are not 100% under stress or stress free.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is conducted in Shimla where the sample chosen among the working women in different government and semi-government enterprises, is on the basis of purposive sampling. Respondents were selected and proper representation was given to all the working women. A semi-structured questionnaire (enclosed in annexure) was framed on the basis of questions related to stress and how do they manage, and respondents were asked to fill them up. Where the respondents were not able to understand it, they were asked questions one by one and were filled by interviewers. The questions were framed in such a manner that the resulting data could be analysed and interpreted. Then accordingly recommendations were made.

DATA COLLECTION

Primary data in this research was the questionnaire that was filled by the women working in various government and semi-government organizations. Since the results of the survey critically depend on the collection of data, therefore, the possible alternatives were taken into consideration. The method of data collection used was: Face-to-face interview with the help of semi-structured questionnaire. A semi-structured schedule of questions was used so as not to limit the choice of the respondents even while maintaining a uniform schedule for the collection of data required. This made the study easier and a more objective analysis could be made. The questionnaire carried 10 questions that briefly summarized the stress level of the working women. A further part of the questionnaire dealt with some suggested questions in which the respondents were asked to give their opinions.

INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The data interpretation was done in the following manner:-

1. Table formation: To show the data collected.
2. Graph: To show percentage of response on each question.

Question wise analysis of the study conducted:

Following are the different questions asked from the women working in different departments, during face to face interviews:

- 1) Age of the women
- 2) Work experience
- 3) If you have to work overtime, how do they deal with it?
- 4) When you are given more work than you can deal with, what they do?
- 5) During a vacation, how you spend time?
- 6) When you encounter a problem between your family life & work life, how do you manage?
- 7) How do you find your work?
- 8) How do feel, like you are?
- 9) When something forces you to change your lifestyle, what do you do?
- 10) If you position yourself in situation of debt, what will you do?

TABLE 1: Q-1 AGE OF WOMEN

Age group	Number of women
20-30	3
30-40	17
40-50	21
50-60	9

Above analysis shows that the maximum number of working women fall in the age group of 40-50. It means that majority of them are quite experienced in handling the life between office work and family work. They sometimes come under stressed when work load increases, but being efficient in their work, they easily overcome it.

TABLE 2: Q-2 WORK EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN

Work experience (in years)	Number of women
0-10	10
10-20	12
20-30	20
30-40	8

According to the above analysis, it is found that the maximum numbers of women are quite experienced in work. However stress does creep into their life but their experience and talent they know how to manage.

TABLE 3: Q-3 WHEN HAVE TO WORK OVERTIME

How do they deal	Number of women
Start working on things that need to be done	24
Think first, and then take their time what they need to do	19
Get annoyed	17

The above analysis depicts that whenever they have to work overtime, or when the work load increases they classify and sort out the work category wise and start working on the things that need to be done. However most them get annoyed and come under stress.

TABLE 4: Q-4 IF MORE WORK IS GIVEN, THEN THEY CAN DEAL WITH

They spend time by	Number of women
Take it as challenge	18
Think about necessary steps to take to deal with	23
Blame others for the problem	9

The above analysis shows that if some more work is given, then they will make plan and a proper course of action to get the work done. Stress may come but they adapt themselves to the situation. Some of them complain also about the work as they are having less experience of work.

TABLE 5: Q-5 DURING A VACATION

They spend time by	Number of women
Going everywhere they can go to	18
Relaxing	25
Find it difficult to relax	7

It was analyzed that during a vacation\ holidays the women either go to some place or relax at home. But most of them just relax at home with family or with friends.

TABLE 6: Q-6 MANAGEMENT OF PROBLEMS BETWEEN FAMILY WORK AND LIFE

They manage as they	Number of women
Take it as challenge	18
Think about necessary steps to take to deal with	23
Blame others for the problem	9

The above analysis shows that whenever a problem comes between their family and work life they handle them properly whereas very few of them instead of managing the situation blame others for the problem

TABLE 7: Q-7 WOMEN FIND WORK

The work is	Number of women
Engaging	24
Amusing	18
Stressful	8

According to the above analysis it is found that women find their work engaging, to some extent amusing whereas very few find it stressful.

TABLE 8: Q-8 WHAT DO WOMEN FEEL?

They feel like they are	Number of women
Ready to tackle anything that comes in their way	21
Calm and open mind	20
Not able to make things go their way	9

It was found from the analysis that women feel that they are calm and open minded and can tackle anything that comes their way.

TABLE 9: Q-9 IF SOMETHING FORCES THEM TO CHANGE THEIR LIFESTYLE

Then women	Number of women
Accept the change	19
Learn how to deal with change	23
Complain about it	8

According to the women if anything forces them to change their lifestyle they learn how to deal with the change and adapt to the situation.

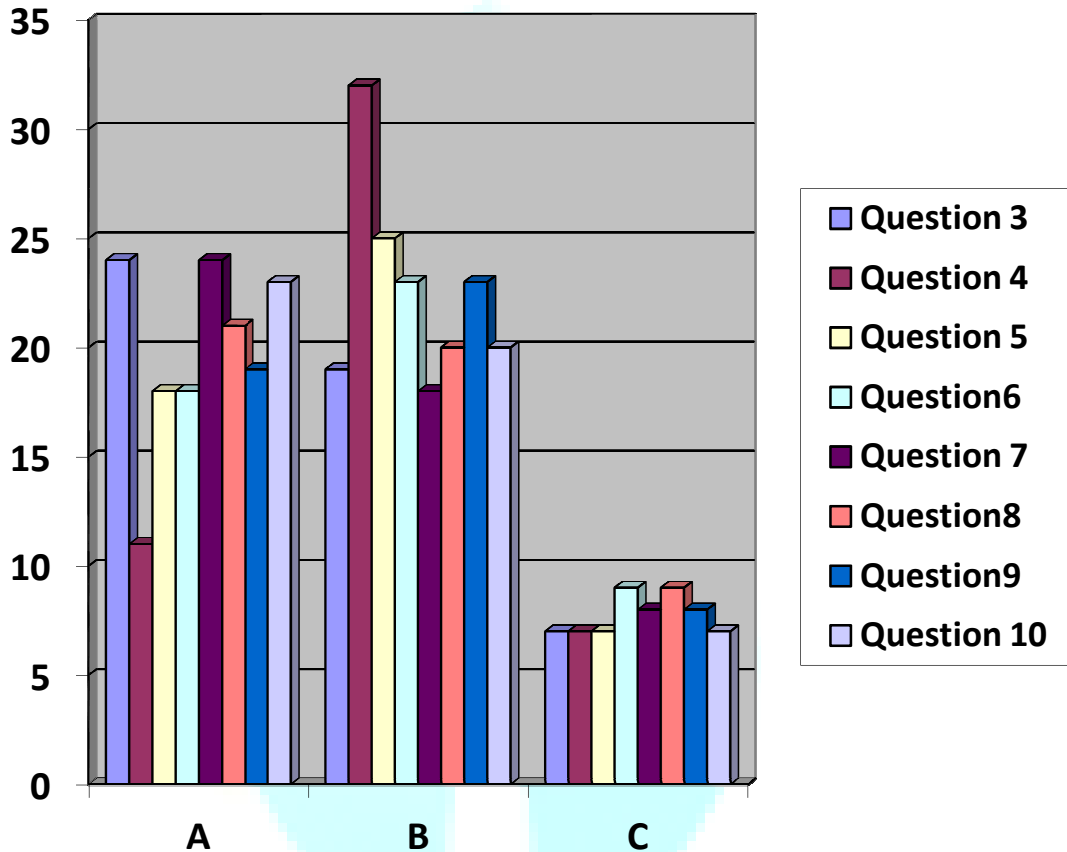
TABLE 10: Q-10 IF THEY POSITION THEMSELVES IN POSITION OF DEBT

How will they deal?	Number of women
Try to settle all financial problem as soon as possible	23
Access the situation and gradually recover from the losses	20
Brood over the problem	7

The survey shows that majority of women will try to settle all the financial problems as soon as they can manage and will gradually recover from losses, if they position themselves in position of debt .A very few number of them will brood over the problem.

TABLE 11: THE DATA COLLECTED IS PRESENTED IN THE FORM OF A TABLE

Question	A	B	C
Question 3	24	19	7
Question 4	11	32	7
Question 5	18	25	7
Question6	18	23	9
Question 7	24	18	8
Question8	21	20	9
Question9	19	23	8
Question 10	23	20	7



Graphical representation

'A' means that women are very active and reliable.

'B' means that women are most likely a very relaxed, laid back and logical individual.

'C' reflects their relatively poor coping mechanism.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSION

OBSERVATION

- While conducting the questionnaire survey on stress management in working women in government and semi-government enterprises, it was observed that some of the women are under stress as work load is more and they have no free time in office.
- But most of them are experienced and are stress free as they know how to accomplish the work and how to manage between office work and family work.
- It was observed that if some of the women get free time in office or at home, they engage themselves by
- ✓ Reading some light fiction books, magazines and newspaper
- ✓ Watching T.V.
- ✓ With hobby jobs and gardening
- ✓ Sewing, knitting and some creative work
- ✓ Discussing day to day problems related to work and find solutions
- ✓ Remaining busy with kids
- ✓ Taking rest, cooking and by doing other household works

CONCLUSION

To conclude it was found that the women working in various government and semi-government enterprises are found to be mostly stress free, as most of them are experienced and they know how to manage their work life and family life. Some of them do get under stress due to work load and they also do not any free time in office.

To make their work easier they even take guidance from their seniors and also make proper plans to get the work easily done.

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